

# Bull Trout Draft Recovery Plan and proposed Critical Habitat

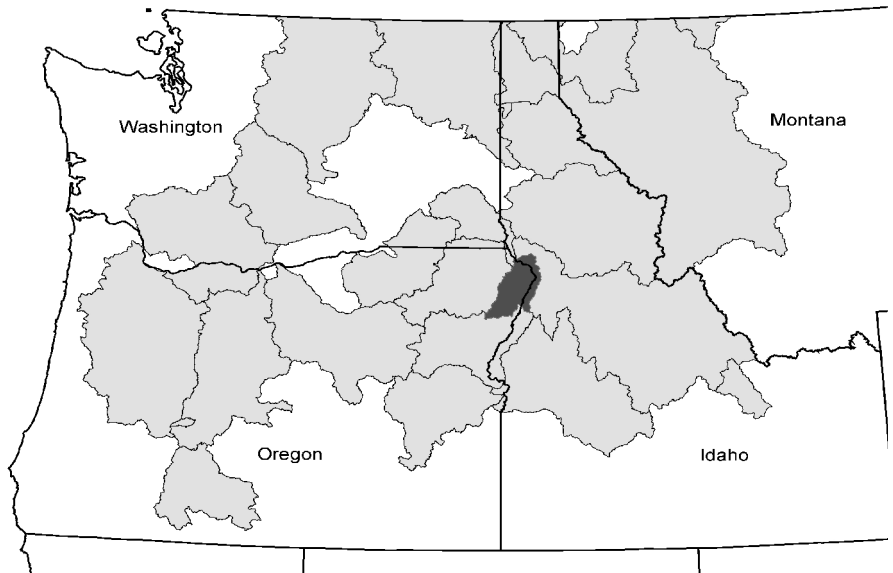
## Innaha-Snake River Recovery Unit (CHAPTER 12)

### **What areas are included in the Innaha-Snake Rivers Recovery Unit?**

The Innaha-Snake River Recovery Unit encompasses the entire Innaha River sub-basin located in northeastern Oregon in Wallowa County and small portions of Baker and Union counties. Sheep and Granite creek sub-basins are located in Idaho and Adam counties in western Idaho. All sub-basins drain into the Snake River above Lower Granite dam. Three core areas identified for the purpose of bull trout recovery are the Innaha River, Sheep Creek and Granite Creek.

### **How much of the area is proposed as critical habitat?**

There are three critical habitat subunits (core areas) containing six local bull trout populations. Four local populations are in the Innaha sub-basin within Oregon and one population in both Sheep and Granite sub-basins in Idaho. The Innaha-Snake Rivers critical habitat unit contains approximately 190 miles of streams in northeastern Oregon and western Idaho. A total of 8 percent of the entire



recovery unit is proposed as critical habitat.

### **Who developed the draft recovery plan and critical habitat proposal?**

The draft recovery plan for bull trout range-wide was developed through the collaboration of Federal, State, Tribal and private biologists working with representatives of local watersheds, private landowners and industry and conservation organizations. A total of 24 recovery unit teams contributed to the development of the current draft recovery plan. These recovery unit teams included experts in biology, hydrology and forestry, as well as natural resource users and stakeholders with interest and knowledge of bull trout and the

habitats they depend on for survival. The critical habitat proposal was based in large part on information provided by the recovery unit teams and supplemented with even more recent information on the current distribution and habitat characteristics of the species.

### **What is the relationship between the draft recovery plan and the critical habitat proposal?**

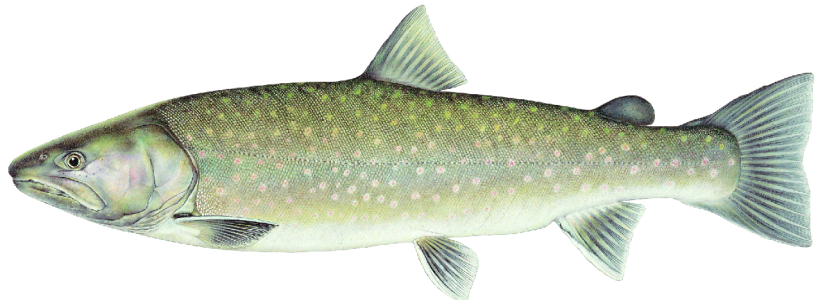
The draft recovery plan and critical habitat proposal are closely linked. The information developed by the recovery unit teams, and the science underlying that information, are the basis for the critical habitat proposals. However, critical habitat is

designed to provide for the conservation of a species by identifying those areas essential for conservation and requiring special management, whereas a recovery plan is a much larger blueprint providing guidance for the eventual recovery and de-listing of a species.

### **Who would be affected by recovery efforts and a critical habitat designation?**

A recovery plan is advisory only and carries no regulatory authority. It is the Fish and Wildlife Service's estimation of the actions necessary for the recovery of the species. Agencies, communities or individuals are encouraged to take voluntary actions described in the recovery plan to benefit bull trout.

The primary effect of a critical habitat designation is that Federal agencies are required to consult with the Fish and Wildlife Service on actions they carry out, fund, or authorize that might affect critical habitat. It is important to note that in most cases, this is already occurring under the section 7 interagency consultation requirements of the Endangered Species Act. Non-Federal entities, including private landowners, that may also be affected could include, for example, those seeking a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 404 permit under the Clean Water Act to build an in-water structure, those seeking Federal approval to discharge effluent into the aquatic environment, or



those seeking Federal funding to implement private property improvements, where such actions affect the aquatic environment that has been designated as critical habitat. But again, in most cases where this link between activities on private lands and Federal funding, permitting, or authorization exists, consultation under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act is already occurring.

A critical habitat designation does not have any effect on non-Federal entities when there is not a Federal nexus. For example, swimming, boating, fishing, farming, ranching, or any of a range of activities normally conducted by a landowner or operator of a business not involving Federal funding, permitting, or authorization in order to occur would not be affected.

### **How was the draft recovery plan for each unit developed?**

Recovery units were delineated based on the biology of the species and considerations for paralleling existing state conservation and fisheries management frameworks wherever possible. Recovery

teams incorporated existing state conservation processes to the degree possible, depending on the degree to which they had been developed (for example, the Montana Bull Trout Restoration Plan, the State of Idaho's Bull Trout Conservation Plan, the State of Washington's Statewide Strategy to Recover Salmon and the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds).

### **What is the status of bull trout in the Imnaha-Snake Rivers Recovery Unit?**

The Imnaha core area contains four local populations. Bull trout in the Imnaha core area persist at moderate numbers, the best estimates are that approximately 4,000 bull trout have spawned annually for the past few years. The majority of spawning likely occurs in the upper portions of the Imnaha River, Big Sheep Creek, Lick Creek, and McCully Creek, all of which, are in or near wilderness areas. The Sheep Creek core area contains one local population and Granite Creek core area contains one local population. Adult abundance

and population numbers and trends in the Sheep Creek and Granite Creek core areas are unknown and are a research need. Historical accounts indicate bull trout were once much more abundant and widespread than they are today.

### **What are the threats to bull trout in the Imnaha-Snake Rivers Recovery Unit?**

Bull trout in the Imnaha-Snake Rivers Recovery Unit face a number of threats including obstruction of migratory corridors from impassable dams and diversions, past and present forest management practices affecting stream habitat conditions, irrigation withdrawals affecting water flow, unscreened diversions that trap fish, and poorly managed livestock grazing affecting stream habitat conditions.

### **What are the recovery goals and objectives?**

The goal of the bull trout recovery plan is to ensure the

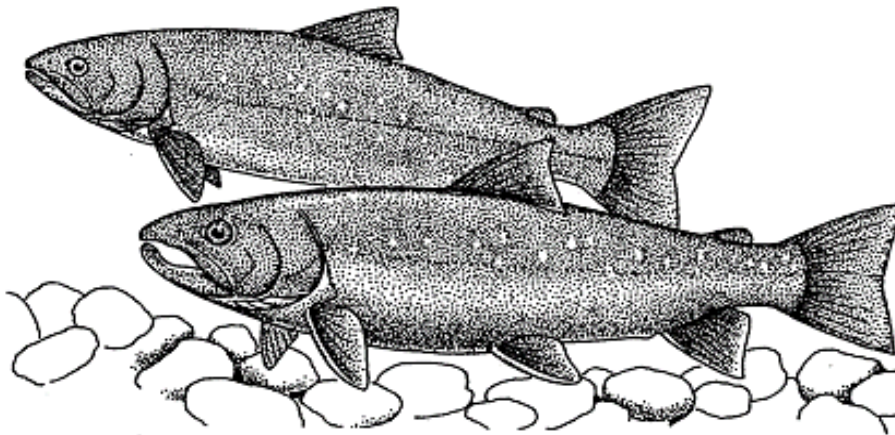
long-term persistence of self-sustaining, complex interacting groups of bull trout distributed across the species' range so that the species can be delisted. The Imnaha-Snake Rivers draft recovery plan lists six local bull trout populations spread over three core areas in the unit. To recover bull trout in the Imnaha-Snake Rivers Recovery Unit, the following objectives have been identified:

- Maintain current distribution of bull trout and restore distribution in previously occupied areas within the recovery unit.
- Maintain stable or increasing trends in abundance of bull trout.
- Restore and maintain suitable habitat conditions for all bull trout life history stages and strategies.
- Conserve genetic diversity of bull trout in this area and provide opportunity for genetic exchange.

### **What are the criteria for measuring recovery?**

Recovery will be measured according to four criteria: distribution, abundance, population trends and connectivity in the Imnaha-Snake Rivers Recovery Unit. The recovery plan includes specific, quantifiable standards for each of these criteria.

- Distribution criteria will be met when bull trout are distributed among at least six local populations in the recovery unit
- Abundance criteria will be met when there are at least 5,000 adult bull trout in the Imnaha River core area. Additional research is needed to determine abundance criteria in Sheep and Granite creeks.
- Trend criteria will be met when adult bull trout populations are stable or increase for at least two bull trout generations at or above abundance criteria.
- Connectivity criteria will be met when specific barriers to bull trout migration in this unit are corrected.



**What actions will be necessary to recover bull trout in the Imnaha-Snake Rivers Recovery Unit?**

Actions to recover bull trout in this unit generally consist of enhancing stream habitat conditions, improving stream flows, and restoring fish passage through stream connectivity thus, increasing opportunities for migration and genetic exchange among local bull trout. This unit has several local populations with relatively good abundance, but they are poorly connected. This fragmentation must be addressed in order for recovery to be adequately achieved. For more information please see the draft Bull Trout Recovery Plan, Imnaha-Snake Rivers Recovery Unit, Chapter 12.

**How long will recovery take?**

A recovery plan is advisory only and carries no regulatory authority; therefore it is difficult to determine how long it will take to recover bull trout in the Imnaha-Snake Rivers Recovery Unit. However, given our best estimate of what government agencies and others might do, it could take three to ten bull trout generations (15 to 25 years) before identified threats to the species can be significantly reduced and bull trout can be considered eligible for delisting.

**How much will recovery cost?**

Estimating the cost of recovery is difficult and complex, due to many variables and unknowns. However, the Imnaha-Snake

Rivers Recovery Unit team has estimated that recovery could cost about \$24 million spread over 25 years. This does not include areas outside the recovery unit. This figure includes estimates of expenditures by local, Tribal, State and Federal governments and by private business and individuals. The estimates are attributed to bull trout conservation but other aquatic species also will benefit. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is soliciting comments from the public on the estimated costs.

**How can I obtain copies of the documents?**

The documents, along with maps, fact sheets, photographs and other materials may be found on the USFWS Pacific Region's website at <http://species.fws.gov/bulltrout>.

**How can I comment?**

The Service will be accepting comments, beginning November 29, 2002, on its draft recovery plan for bull trout in the Columbia and Klamath river basins and in the St. Mary-Belly River Basin in Montana. Comments on the draft recovery plan will be accepted for 90 days, until February 27, 2003. Comments on the draft recovery plan may be mailed to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Snake River Basin Office, 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Room 368, Boise, ID 83709; faxed to 208-378-5262, or sent via e-mail to: [fwlsrbocomment@fws.gov](mailto:fwlsrbocomment@fws.gov)

Beginning November 29, 2002, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will accept comments from the public on the agency's proposal to designate critical habitat for the Columbia River and Klamath River distinct population segments of bull trout. Comments will be accepted for 60 days, until January 28, 2003. Comments on the critical habitat proposal may be submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Regional Office, attn: John Young, Bull Trout Coordinator, 911 N.E. 11th Avenue, Portland Oregon 97232; faxed to 503.231.6243 or e-mailed to: [R1bulltroutCH@r1.fws.gov](mailto:R1bulltroutCH@r1.fws.gov)

In addition, a series of public meetings and public hearings will be held in January. Times and locations are posted on our Bull Trout website at <http://species.fws.gov/bulltrout> and will be publicized in local newspapers.

***This is only a brief summary.***

***Please see full draft recovery plan and critical habitat proposal for complete details.***